

## In "Little Chihuahua"

**S**AND and adobe—which is only sand made into mud and then baked in the sun! It is really quite convenient to dig up in your front yard the material out of which to build your house.

In the houses and around them, chickens, parrots, and children have apparently equal rights, to say nothing of larger animals. And there are flowers and greenery wherever possible, secured at infinite cost of watering the dry soil.

But oh, the sand—you wade through it on the sidewalks that are in no wise separated from the streets; you see it swept from before each door in the morning—the extreme of cleanliness in most of the homes—only to be drifted back by each wind that blows.

The food? *Frijoles* (fray-ho'-les), or beans cooked in varying ways; *tamales* (to-mah'-lays), a mixture of cornmeal, meat, and the ever-present chili pepper, wrapped in corn-husks and steamed; a box of these sent to one of our girls from her own home is as welcome as a box of dainties sent to your own girl, homesick for "mother's cooking"; *chili con carne* (with meat) *con nuevas* (with eggs), are additional favorites. For bread read *tortillas* (tort-til'-lyahs), dough rolled thin and baked on a hot plate.

Occupation—for the men, whatever odd jobs they can pick up, as a rule. For the women, the little housework required, and the exquisite drawnwork for which they are famed. Few can read, even if they have books or papers. To us they are immigrants, but the ordinary literature for aliens, with its allusions to the ocean, ships, etc., is meaningless to them. What can they comprehend of the boundless sweep of waters who have seen in all their

lives only hot, sandy plains and masses of equally hot, bare rock, hard and repellant all through the day? But the moment the shadows fall these same mountains of rock are tinted with such exquisite colors of purple and blue and amber as might well be envied by dwellers in less forbidding surroundings. As to the sunsets—surely nowhere else than over the *mésa* at El Paso hang such gold-fringed clouds of crimson and purple and green.

Many of the Mexican stores bear curious names, as "The Dove", for instance, or even Japanese titles, of which they seem to be very fond. The familiar Cafeteria denotes a restaurant, and slight acquaintance with Spanish reveals the meaning of Zapateria (shoe-store), Panateria (bakery), or Barbateria.

The usual costume of the women is a black dress, with a black shawl thrown over the head and crossed on the shoulders. Young girls wear white or colored scarf-shawls. How they keep them on is a matter of conjecture only.

This is "little Chihuahua", an area of approximately a square mile in the city of El Paso—an area of almost complete Mexican occupation, the people being largely refugees. What would happen if there was real war on this part of "the border", cannot even be guessed. When the early "rumors of war" came, our El Paso settlement workers were advised to leave the house at night for a short time, lest they might "be frightened". But little fear have they who live the Gospel of "good-will to men" day after day among these people.

The Bureau Secretaries have given an admirable description of the Home and its activities, from which we quote:

"The Rose Gregory Houchen Settlement House is the one beauty spot in all this desolation. It rises tall and white among its low brown neighbors, with sidewalk and neat curb flanked with strips of grass. The Hudson playground with its grass where the

children love to roll and tumble, its swings and slides, is the only playground in El Paso for Mexican children, though the public schools are putting in some playground work. It is very popular and in use constantly, the boys and girls having alternate days.

"In the house all is the perfection of neatness. The third floor is given up to the workers, and has four bedrooms, parlor, dining room, kitchen and bath. In the basement are rooms used for the kindergarten, Sunday-school and Spanish Methodist Church."

(A Spanish prayer meeting attended by visitors in the Home, had for its makeup six Mexican women, three men, the pastor, one boy, two girls, two babies in carriages, and two on the floor. With the exception of the babies all but two of the attendants took part in the meeting, and one of these called for a hymn. Oh, how they sang, with the abandon and passion of the Spanish race!)

"The domestic science room is used by bright-eyed girls and young women. These are the cooking classes, and when the Bureau Secretaries visited them they were learning the art of pie-making. The little girls made tarts while the older ones made pies with all kinds of fancy designs on the top crust. Such delicious odors would float up that we had to leave our work and go down to see the enthusiastic rolling and trimming of pie crust, and later, the result that looked so like "what mother used to make". It was a proud lot of girls and young women who went carrying with them the results of their labor.

"Kindergarten is held each weekday morning except Saturday. The little tots come from homes where only Spanish is spoken and at first it is difficult to make them understand English.

"From a chance remark to a Mexican clerking in a store, the Superintendent obtained the names of twenty girls, mostly clerks, and secured them for a physical training class.

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"The boys' club meeting three times a week is a most enthusiastic gathering. This is the only place outside a saloon where these boys may gather for recreation. They pay dues, hold a business meeting, have music, play games, etc. Sometimes they have entertained their friends, and mothers, sisters and sweet-hearts came. A good program, refreshments and a good time kept them until after midnight. Mexican courtesy was everywhere evident.

"Mother's meetings, English classes for men, Camp Fire girls, and a Queen Esther Circle which meets Sunday afternoon, are among the other activities.

"The policy is to give nothing away which people can pay for, and even those coming to the door asking aid are invited to work for it. One such woman gladly accepted the opportunity to wash windows. Soon the superintendent heard a great splashing and on investigation found the woman standing as far away as possible and throwing the water at the window with a dipper. Further business was postponed and a lesson in window-washing given. It would have been easier for the superintendent to have washed them in the first place, and the new tinting on the walls would not have suffered as much, but the woman would have lost her first lesson in the household task."

There is no more important work in our Society than this indirect aid to our poor, down-trodden, ignorant neighbor on the southern frontier of the United States. For the Rose Gregory Houchen Settlement means much for the present and more for the future of both countries.

Woman's Home Missionary Society  
Methodist Episcopal Church  
150 Fifth Avenue, New York City  
50 or less, 6c.; 50 to 100, 10c.